

PLEASE NOTE: This is a machine transcription. Some punctuation and spelling weirdness are to be expected.

Hey, it's Cindy. This is episode number 70 of the Tiny Course Empire Podcast. A couple of weeks ago, I was talking to a friend of mine, Jeff Herring, about growing my email list and some of the ways that I do that. And one of the things, one of the tricks that I use to grow my email list is something called content upgrades.

And he asked me to teach that to his community because it's something that not a lot of content creators are doing. So we scheduled a call and I hosted a webinar for his community and it was so well received and such important information for you to have that I asked Jeff if he would mind if I shared it with you on the podcast.

And of course he said yes.

So today's show is the remixed and remastered version of that webinar that I did a few weeks ago for Jeff's community. I hope you enjoy it.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO START, GROW, AND SCALE YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS

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As always, you will find the show notes, the recommended resources, and the transcript for this episode at TinyCourseEmpire.com/70. If you know someone else who could use this information, who's looking for maybe new ways to grow their email list, I would appreciate it if you would share that link with them as well.

And now let's get right to it.

Today we are talking about turning content consumers into email subscribers because to my way of thinking in my world, the whole purpose of creating content is to build your community, is to build your audience, to build your email list.

Because your email list, as a small business owner, your email list is your most valuable asset. That's what you want to spend the most of your time, most of your energy doing is promoting that email list and building that subscriber base, because that's how you then market your business. It is the most profitable way to market your business today has been for quite some time, and I cannot see a world where it will not continue to be the best, most efficient, most effective way to market your business.

So focusing on building that list.

Cause all these people come out with these new things, you know, and it, it always starts out, email is dead. And then they tell you why this thing's better. I always find it very ironic that they've sent you this information by email.

Yeah, yeah, exactly. No, email is definitely not be not dead.

Email is the most important thing you can be doing in your business right now, whether you run an online business or an offline business. Um, and people, people come to me all the time and say, okay, but how do I get subscribers? How do I build my email list? What do I do? Well, this is, there's a lot of different ways that you can do that.

This is one technique. This is probably one of the easiest ones, and that's what we're going to talk about today, and that is content upgrades. So what exactly is a content upgrade? Well, content upgrade is, An opt-in form that is specific to the piece of content that your customer, that your reader, or that your podcast listener or your video watcher, whatever they just consumed of yours, whatever piece of content they were just reading, listening to watching the content upgrade is specific to that piece of content.

So in other words, it's not your generic opt-in offer that comes up, you know, that pops up on the screen whenever somebody lands on your website. It's not the one that's in the sidebar. It's not the one that is in the scroll, you know, in the scroll bar. It's a specific piece of content tailored to that, uh, to whatever blog post they just read, whatever podcast they just listened to.

It gives your reader or your listener, or your watcher the exact next steps that they need to take. And this is something that. I really try to remind people of your content, your, your opt-in offers need to lead your subscribers down a path, right? You take them from one step to the next step to the next step.

And ideally you want those to be baby steps. You want them to be small and actionable so that they can make progress on their goals so that they can achieve what they need to achieve so that they can get the results. Because when they get good results with what you are sharing, whether it's free content, paid content, an upgrade, an opt-in offer, whatever it is, when they get results, they will come back to you again and again and again.

And that's what turns your readers or your podcast listeners or your email subscribers into fans and fans make purchases.

Cindy, if I can jump in and just kind of underscore what you're saying. Cause I want y'all to understand how much Cindy believes in what she's saying because, um, how much do you use social media, Cindy?

I have 75 followers on Facebook, and that's it. Right.

My only social media account. I don't have Instagram. I don't have a Twitter account. Well, I have a Twitter account that I have no followers on and I never use. I use it to log into things.

Absolutely love it. Thanks.

So, a content upgrade.

There's another reason. There's a couple other reasons why we want to use content upgrades instead of those, you know, kind of generic sidebar opt-ins. You know, if you're, if you're old like me, you'll remember those. It used to be the thing, you had to put the, the opt-in offer in the right top of your screen.

That was where your, that was where your opt-in form went. Content upgrades are a little bit different, and we'll look at how in a little while, but they result in higher opt-in rates because it's giving your, your reader that next step. They're not ad blind to it like they are the ones in the sidebar or the pop-ups.

They get to the end of a blog post or an article or a, they watch a video, and the very next thing that they are offered to do is to download your content upgrade and take the next step that they need to take to get the results that you're promising them. So higher conversion rates for the opt-in itself, higher conversion rates after the opt-in.

It allows you to build a more engaged email list. And this is kind of advanced and you may not be there quite yet with your email list building, and that's okay if you're not. But content upgrades also allow you to better segment your list because you can know exactly what people are interested in.

This is really important for me, um, in my business, and I'll tell you why. Because I teach a lot of different things. I teach email marketing, I teach course creation. I teach content marketing. I teach systems. I teach how to scale an online business. I teach how to start an online business. So I have lots of different people in my community.

I have people at lots of different levels doing lots of different things, and it's those content upgrades that allow me to segment my list and know exactly what somebody is interested in at any given time. I know if they came in through a piece of content that was talking about email marketing, that they're interested in email marketing.

I know if they came in through a piece of content that's talking about course creation, that they're probably interested in course creation. Not to say that there's no crossover in there, but it allows me to do some more advanced segmentation of my list. And again, if you are just getting started with building your email list, you probably don't care about any of this advanced segmentation, and that's okay.

But down the road when you have a few hundred people on your list, or a few thousand people on your list, you're going to be really glad that you have that information.

Oh, amen. To that, Cindy, because I haven't talked about this in ages. Um, my, my first email list was on Compuserve. Okay. On my Compuserve email. Wow.

And it was made up of, People that had written in, in response to my relationship column. Yeah. Like written in like with like you opened the mail and read a letter and, and stuff, and they included their, their email address and it worked for a while. Yeah. Um, but once I got up past a hundred people and then somebody wanted to unsubscribe, that was, that hurt the eyes.

Yeah. I was like, okay, I gotta find something different. Yeah. So, yeah. Yeah. Even, even if you're just starting out, you know, don't, don't do it that way.

Yeah, definitely don't do it that way. But, uh, but do, you know, start thinking about how you want to segment your list down the road and, and using content upgrades gives you an easy path to do that.

And it also makes for a happier email list when you do that. When you are presenting people with offers that are relevant to them, instead of whatever happened to come across your desk today, that makes for a happier email list of more engaged email list and people who are more likely to buy from you and more likely to stay on your list as well.

So that's what a content upgrade is and why we like them. Let's talk about where you can actually use them. And spoiler alert, you can use a content upgrade anywhere. I use them on my blog posts. I use them on my podcast episodes. You could use them on YouTube videos, you could use them on content you are publishing on other platforms like Medium or LinkedIn, or you could even use them if you're doing like longform social media. If you're doing, um, Twitter threads are pretty hot right now. I know. Um, if you're doing, you know, Facebook stories or Instagram reels or anything like that, you could use content upgrades there as well. So any place that you are publishing content is a good opportunity to use a content upgrade.

There's a lot of different ways that you can manage these, and we're going to talk more about those later. But first, I want to give you four really easy ways that you can use content upgrades in your, in your content marketing. Or four easy ways to create those content upgrades.

The first one I want to talk about is a simple checklist. Now you guys that know me know that I am very much into checklists. I am very much into systems. I want everything to be as efficient and as streamlined as possible because that's what gets me out of my office sooner. It not only that, it's what makes me more money because I'm consistent in what I do and because I am more efficient.

So, um, if you are not using checklists in your business, I really want to encourage you to do that. Really want to encourage you to systemize what you're doing, create those processes, and these simple checklists that you can create as a content upgrade are a part of that. You can base a checklist on the content of your post.

I know Jeff often writes articles in this very simple format where it's Do this thing, do this next thing, do this next thing, do this next thing. Right? Right. Yep. That's a checklist. Yep. You are creating a checklist in article format, and it's really easy to then take that content that you've written, those words that you wrote, and turn them into a checklist that people can then download.

This works really well for how-to guides cheat sheets, um, quickstart guides, things like that. Those types of content really lend themselves well to creating a checklist, and they're super easy to create. All you have to do is add them to, you know, Microsoft and clean up the text a little bit, shorten it a little bit, you know, streamline it a bit.

You can put it in Canva if you want to make it fancy. Uh, you certainly don't have to. I have. Hundreds of checklists in my membership that were created in Microsoft Word, and people love them, so you don't have to get fancy with it unless you want to. Right? Readers love these checklists because yes, they just read the content.

They just read that article. But if it's something that they want to do, if it's something that they want to come back to, if it's, if it's a technique that they're trying to learn, for example, and they, they want to reference that post again, now they've gotta worry about bookmarking it. What if your site goes offline?

What if you decide to retire to The Bahamas and you take your your site offline? They're not going to be able to find that checklist again, right? So by giving them the option to download a simple P D F with the checklist on it, you're making it super easy for them. Now, of course, you do want them to come back to your site, so you're going to want links in that checklist back to your site.

We'll talk more about that later. Jeff. Remind me to talk about what to put at the end of your content upgrades when we get there. But checklists that is, is a really easy way to create a simple content upgrade, right from the content that you've just created. You've already written it, so it doesn't take much to then turn that into a checklist for people to download.

So that's the first strategy that I recommend. The next one is a resource guide. Now, not all blog posts, not all articles, not all content that you write lends itself to a step-

by-step process, right? It's not all how-to stuff. Maybe you wrote, um, a listical, maybe you wrote a case study, or maybe you're reviewing a product or a service.

These types of content lend themselves really well to resource guides, which is just a simple PDF 2, 3, 4 pages. It doesn't have to be very long. It can even be just one page with, you know, here are my recommendations for webcams based on my reviews, or here are my recommendations for instant pot clones.

If you, you know, if you have a, a cooking blog, um, or here are my recommendations for vacation spots, right? It doesn't take a lot of, um, a lot of content to kind of pull that together. It's really easy to create using Canva or there's another. Program called Designer, it's Designrr.io designer, which you can upload your blog post to.

In fact, I don't even think you have to upload it. I think you just put your, um, I think you can just put your URL in there and designer will suck in the content of your blog post and turn it into a P D F for you. And it's all formatted. They've got all different kinds of templates in there that you can use.

Really, really slick system. So it'll take you two minutes to turn that blog post into a resource guide. Now, pro tip here, because this is where a lot of people and sometimes really established, highly profitable people, drop the ball, use those resource guides, link out to those resources using your affiliate links.

In other words, don't just link directly to that, you know, to that hotel in The Bahamas or to, uh, to that instant pot clone on Amazon or to that webcam on Amazon. Use your affiliate link and earn a little bit of cash every time somebody clicks on those links. This is what I like to call hidden cash, and I have an entire program about uncovering hidden cash in your business.

And this is one of the places where it tends to hide. People forget to use their affiliate links or they think, oh, you know, it's too much hassle to go sign up for an affiliate program for this thing or that thing just to put a, a simple link in here. But let me tell you, those links will earn you money month after month and year after year and you don't have to do anything.

That is truly passive income. So do not skip that step. Use those affiliate links in your resource guides and in the blog post itself. So that's a, that's a little bonus tip for you today.

So that's the second kind of content upgrade that's really easy to create.

We've talked about checklists from your blog post. We've talked about a resource guide created from the blog post, but what about reusing other content that you've already created?

Another favorite idea of mine is to repurpose my course content. Now, I talked earlier about how my training programs inside [Six-Figure Systems](#) and the ones that I sell independently on the site.

They have a lot of checklists in them. They have a lot of resource guides, they have a lot of cheat sheets. They have a lot of downloadable content that, uh, my students get. Those pages of downloadable content make really, really good content upgrades. You guys, you've already created them.

That's brilliant.

Yeah, you've already created them. Plus it gives your readers or your podcast listeners, or your video watchers or whoever is paying attention to your content, it gives them a sneak peek into your course. It lets them see how good it is. It's like a taste test. It's like when you go to Costco when they have, you know, little, little hors d'oeuvres everywhere for you to taste because they want you to buy that product.

It's the same way with your content upgrade. You can take those PDFs that you've created for your courses and turn them into content upgrades. And this works for any type of content. We talked about the checklists work better for, you know, how to guides and the resource guides work better for case studies or review type blog posts. These types, where you're reusing your course content that works on anything as long as it is a related topic. As long as you are talking about something that's related to the course topic, this kind of content upgrade works perfectly, and it's even better because there's nothing new to create. You're literally just going to take the PDF that you created for the course, give it, you know, maybe a new file name, maybe not, and turn it into an opt-in offer for people at the end of that blog post or at the end of that podcast.

I do want to caution you though, if you're going to do this, and I hope you will, but if you are using this strategy, make sure that you follow this up with a strong call to action to go and buy the whole course. That's the point of using this style of content upgrade. You want people to get that taste test. You want to wet their appetite for the whole thing.

So you want to make sure that you have a strong call to action that says, "Hey, you know, this is just a small piece of this bigger course, and here's why you need this."

And you can follow it up with an email sequence that then sells the course.

And I'll give, I'll give you another off the cuff tip here. If you have promoted your course, let's say you, let's say you've created a, a digital course and you've promoted that with an email sequence to your list. Maybe you created this course a year ago or whatever. You promoted it with a, a short email sequence, five or six emails, and then you turn a piece of that course into a content upgrade.

Take those emails that you wrote that you sent out to your email list and put them in the follow up sequence. So you've already created all of the content you need to then upsell this course to your new subscribers through that content upgrade. Does that make sense? Jeff?

Makes a lot of sense. That's that's worth price of admission right there.

Yeah. Don't reinvent the wheel. Just use what you've already created.

Yeah. Just grease the wheels you already got.

That's right.

And I know that there are still some people who are saying Yes, but this all still sounds like work. I don't have time to put together a new email funnel. I don't have time to, even though I already wrote the content. I don't want to put it into Canva. I don't want to do any of that is too much work, or I don't know what to include.

So I've got a fourth strategy for you that I swore would never, ever, ever work. I could not see how this even made sense. I fought it until I finally threw up my hands and said, fine, I'm just going to do it. And I'm stunned at how effective it's been. I gotta tell you. And that is just a simple P D F download of the blog post itself.

The first time that a friend of mine said to me, why can't I download your blog post as a P D F. I was, I was just, I was so confused. I'm like, why would you want to download my blog post as a P D F ? That makes no sense to me. I would never, ever, ever do that. And she said, I download blog post as pdf all the time.

I download them and save them so I can read them again later. I'm like, go back to the link. You can read it again later that way. It just made no sense to me. But you know what? I am not my audience. So after three or four people said to me, I'm trying to download your blog post as a P D F, and I can't do it, I thought I should do something about this.

So I found a plugin that does this. It's called Post Gopher. Uh, it's a paid plugin for WordPress. It only works on WordPress as far as I know. But if you have a WordPress blog, check it out. It costs me, I think it costs me like 30 bucks a year. And I get dozens of email subscribers. All it does is people can click a button at the top of my blog post that says, no time to read right now download a PDF instead.

It's a big yellow button at the top of the blog post. They click that they enter their name and their email and Post Gopher creates a P D F for me. I don't have to create the pdf, I don't have to put it in Canva, make it pretty. I don't do any of that. Post Gopher does all the work, adds them to my email list, sends them the pdf.

Done. 100% automated. I do follow that up with a get to know me sequence just so they're not just dumped into my general email list where who knows what's going on in there and they might get confused, right? But, um, you can follow that up with, with any kind of what you might call a nurture sequence.

You know, I don't like that word, but that's what other people call it. So any kind of a get to know you sequence just so they know what you're all about.

That's a probably the easiest content upgrade you could ever create, and I am shocked at how effective it is. In fact, I went in today and the opt-in rate on these is huge. 10% of people who read the post click that big yellow button.

And of the people who click the big yellow button at the top, 55% of them opt in. I tell you, I was shocked. Shocked because again, I'm, I'm not my audience. I would never download a PDF of a blog post. This is not my thing.

So these opt-in rates, you know, you guys, this is huge. You are not getting this kind of opt-in rate in the sidebar on your blog. I guarantee it. This, these are just not numbers that you would normally see, but these are numbers that you can see from content upgrades because again, they are very, very specific to what the person is reading.

They're related to what they want to know more about. And I know Jeff is a big fan of, of giving people the next thing to do. He does that in all of his articles. This is exactly what a content upgrade does. It gives people the next thing to do.

So Jeff?

Yes ma'am.

Are you using content upgrades in your, uh, in your content these days?

I am. And yet I have taken careful notes cause checklist a lot, resource guide, some, um, I've never used course content.

Never. And I don't have simple PDF ones. So you know what I wrote above these four things is. A question, what would happen if I created every one of these with every article, right? How many opt-ins would I have out there? How many fishing lines in the water would I have fishing?

I like, I'd love that fishing lines in the water analogy. I love that. So good.

The other one I've been playing with, I think I, I think I told you about it earlier, um, is I'll have, sometimes I'll send people to another article as their Right. Um, lead magnet. Yep. If it's, especially if it's a really good one on what they've just read or just watched or whatever.

Mm-hmm. And, and some people go, how can you send them to another article on medium or to your, on your blog or whatever? I said, well, you know, they might find that on their own. My job is to help them find it, to guide them. And, and that's, you know, that's a super easy one to create too.

Yeah. I, I think I told you this the other day.

I opted in, this has been years ago now. I opted in for something, it was like five strategies to do blah, blah, blah or whatever. And when I opted in, they sent me an email with the first strategy to learn. And the first strategy to learn was a link to a blog post that they wrote about that strategy.

And every day, for five days, I got a link to another blog post and that was their lead magnet. And I thought that was brilliant. They didn't have to do anything extra. All they had to do was write five emails and get those scheduled in their auto responder and link back to their blog. And not only were they serving me as their subscriber, they were giving me the information that I wanted. They were driving traffic back to their site, which is important as well.

Wherever you're publishing content, the more traffic you can drive back to that content, the, the better it's going to rank. The better, you know, if you're publishing on Medium or on YouTube, um, the more traffic you personally drive, the better the algorithm thinks your content is, and the more likely they are to feature you in whatever way they, they feature content on that platform.

So any traffic you can send is good traffic. And if you've already created the content, why the heck not? Why, you know, why not use that opportunity to send people back to, uh, to the content that you've already created? Get more out of it.

I'm getting excited about this idea of once I spoke it out loud of doing every one of these for a piece of content.

Cuz if you follow the templates and do three mistakes, or three this, or three that, there's a checklist right there, right?

I've created a few courses could probably, um, you know, uh, do that as well.

And then the, the p d f, it's, you know, it's one of those things I've known about but, and, and know I should do, but just haven't.

I was floored by the response to the PDF thing. Just floored. Yeah. Yeah. Something else that you can do, and I didn't plan to talk about this, but, um, you talking about creating content upgrades for all of these, um, for all of these pieces of content that you create, right? That can get a little overwhelming. It can get a little bit much, you have to set up a new, you know, a new automation in your email platform to deliver it. It can be kind of a lot, right? I'm, yes, it's better to have more lines in the water, as you say, more fishing lines in the water, but you don't want to get tangled in them, but you don't want to, you don't want to create a net, right?

Yeah. So if it starts to become overwhelming, if it starts to be too much, take the best ones that you've created, the ones that perform the best and reuse them.

The way I like to think about this, I said that I teach a lot of different things. I teach email marketing. I teach content, uh, marketing. I teach course creation.

I teach, you know, how to scale a business. I teach lots of different things. I've kind of broken that out into about six different categories, and I could create a content upgrade aimed at each of those categories. So if the person is reading about something to do with course creation, maybe there is a course creation content upgrade that kind of fits generically within that category, then you've only got a few content upgrades that still cover the majority of what you teach, but you don't have, you know, the, the overhead of maintaining a new content upgrade or creating a new content upgrade for every single piece of content.

I like that. That's smart.

So let's start wrapping this show up. Um, any, any final tidbits and tips and words of wisdom, Cindy?

Go create content upgrades. Don't overthink it. I used to do this, I would come up with a great idea for a lead magnet and then I wouldn't create the lead magnet because I would think, but I don't have the follow-up system.

What am I going to promote? I didn't have any of that stuff in place, so I would not create the lead magnet. And it held me back from building my list for years. So don't overthink it. Keep it simple, you know, give them a simple one page or two page pdf. They'll be thrilled and you will be building your email list and worry about what comes later, later.

Absolutely. And there is so much power in what you just said because, um, those of you that have been with me for a while, if you remember, an early short-term membership called Article Marketing for Beginners. Okay. It was a 12 week series. Each week you got a PDF with instructions and a video.

Okay. I launched that on a Thursday, Cindy, with three of the 12 done thinking, you know, cause I, I, I don't gotta get all these done. I just gotta stay a week ahead.

You just gotta be ahead of people.

Yeah. I will, I will confess that there were, cause you know, I had to have something new by each Thursday.

Right, right. So there was some, there was a couple of late Wednesday nights when I'm thinking, I gotta get this done. Yeah. Um, but it got done and, you know, it became an evergreen product. Yeah. It would now need to be updated. I probably should do that. But, um, anyway, you know, yeah. Don't, don't overthink it.

Here, here's my, here's my metaphor for this. Okay. If you're driving on a dark country road at night and there's no moon and no stars, it's freaking dark. Okay. You can only see as far as your headlights, right. And you've got a choice. You can go, I can only see as far as my headlights and freeze up and not move.

Or you can go as far as your headlights go. And it's amazing how that keeps getting longer and longer out in front of you. Right? Yeah. So it does, you know, far. Go as far as your headlights and we'll help you with the rest.

Hey, it's Cindy. I hope you enjoyed this conversation that I had with Jeff Herring about using content upgrades to grow your email list. I'd love to hear from you about your insights if you're using this method to build your subscriber list, or if you have taken away some new ideas to try, I'd like to hear about it.

Come over to TinyCourseEmpire.com/70. That's where you'll find the show notes, the transcript, and all of the resources we mentioned in this week's episode. And while you're there, do me a favor, hit that like and subscribe button so that you can get notified every time we release a new episode.

They drop into your podcast player of choice every Thursday morning.

And that's it for me this week. Have a great day everyone, and I will talk to you all again next week.

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Tiny Course Empire Podcast Episode 70: Four Easy Content Upgrades To Grow Your Mailing List

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